

Article

Mimesis, Metaphor, and Sports' Liturgical Constitution: Ricoeurian and Augustinian Contributions

Reuben Hoetmer

Theology and Religion, University of Oxford, Oxford OX1 2JD, UK; reuben.hoetmer@bfriars.ox.ac.uk

Abstract: Several scholars have observed the constructive possibilities in approaching sport as cultural liturgy. In what follows, I turn to hermeneutic resources in Paul Ricoeur and Augustine to elucidate the means of sports' liturgical appropriation and the capacity of this appropriation to mediate values of ideological and religious significance. Drawing on Ricoeur's analysis of Aristotelian *mimesis*, I approach sport as embodied metaphor and so locate metaphor as a central problem in sport hermeneutics. Following Ricoeur, I address this problem primarily by way of the 'surplus of meaning' within metaphor and its reference, and the role of Wittgensteinian 'seeing-as' in metaphor's interpretation. Following Augustine, I observe the pivotal roles of desire and tradition within 'ways of seeing' and their outworkings in Augustine's liturgical interpretation of ancient spectacles. Translating these considerations into sport, I argue that sport's liturgical appropriation similarly proceeds through 'ways of seeing' or experiencing the embodied metaphor of sport, and that these ways are deeply informed by particular desires and cultural and ideological traditions.

Keywords: sport; hermeneutics; Ricoeur; Augustine; liturgy; religion; metaphor



Citation: Hoetmer, Reuben. 2023. *Mimesis, Metaphor, and Sports' Liturgical Constitution: Ricoeurian and Augustinian Contributions*. Religions 14: 1329. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101329>

Academic Editors: Robert Ellis and Tracy J. Trothen

Received: 30 June 2023

Revised: 20 September 2023

Accepted: 21 September 2023

Published: 23 October 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The task of understanding and interpreting sport continues to present a number of challenges. Central to this task is the navigation of the enduring problem of sport's internal values and its external world. I do not directly revisit these challenges but address one significant avenue of meaning in sport: its role as cultural liturgy. Sport as liturgy presents a unique case for interpretation, for here the boundaries between sport and its non-sport world are blurred and form a unity as sport rises to the level of religion in mediating particular values, ideologies, and assumptions about its world. Understanding how this proceeds is essential for a holistic grasp of the relations of sport and society. It is also especially significant for those seeking faithfulness to particular religious traditions amidst the conflicting and counter-formative influences of sport.

Several scholars observe the constructive possibilities in approaching sport as a cultural liturgy (Harvey 2014; Hoberman 1984; Hoven 2016; Smith 2020; White 2018). Andrew Edgar, for instance, finds the "entwining of sport and liturgy" in ancient Greek and Meso-American sports and the mediation of these games "by mythical and transcendent narratives" (Edgar 2012, pp. 25, 28). As liturgies, these sports played an important role in forming the minds and affections of their participants: their "intellectual understanding of what is good and true. . . [and] feeling of pleasure before the good and pain before the bad" (Edgar 2012, p. 25). Zachary Smith also argues for the importance of the liturgical frame in understanding sport. He attends to sport's intersections with ritual and observes uses of the liturgical frame within sport's interpretation as a cultural symbol, form of worship, and even sacrament. Affirming sport's capacity to "pla[y] out larger cultural dramas and ritually enact the grand myths and values" of a society, he turns to the 'cultural liturgies' project of James K.A. Smith (Smith 2019, p. 6). Here, "sport operates as a ritual of ultimacy, revealing deep desires, passions, and even loves. . . [and] further shapes them through ongoing practice" (Smith 2019, p. 9). Such liturgies function as "normative cultural pedagogies" (Smith 2019, p. 9).

In what follows, I turn to hermeneutic resources in Paul Ricoeur and Augustine to better clarify how sport has this liturgical potential, and further, how meaning is constructed within sports' liturgical appropriation.¹ A primary issue I address is the lack of external reference within sport. While the internal ends within sporting practices are often reasonably discernable, the issue of how sport might 'refer to', or be 'about' particular non-sporting realities requires further clarification. Andrew Edgar observes that a "semantics" or "aboutness" is actualized within sports' liturgical framings (Edgar 2012, p. 28). That is, sports refer to non-sport realities—realities of ideological and philosophical significance—through their mediation by a culture's grand narratives. The task of this paper is to better elucidate how such mediations proceed. While sport is commonly understood to 'mirror' its culture, the same or similar sports are liturgically constructed along diverse and often contradictory lines. Sport, for instance, is observed to inculcate the hierarchical, disciplinary, meritocratic, and competitive values of late industrial capitalism (Brohm 1978), glorify the sacrificial and sacral violence of America's "military-entertainment complex" (Smith 2009), provide "liturg[ies] of liberation" among "symbols of cosmic struggle" and a self-transcending religious spirit (Novak 1976), and mediate a "secular sacrament" of "a great gendered master narrative of the imperial age" (Burstyn 1999). In each of these instances, the relations between sport's internal structures and its external culture is not well clarified, and the evident polysemy within sport liturgical appropriation merely confirms the need for deeper analysis.

This paper begins by turning to Ricoeur's analysis of *mimesis* and metaphor in the arts to construct an understanding of sport as 'embodied metaphor.' Following Ricoeur, I then identify "metaphor as the central problem in [sport] hermeneutics" (Ricoeur 1973) and show how Ricoeur addresses this problem by observing a 'surplus of meaning' and the possibilities of metaphorical reference to external worlds through ways of seeing, Wittgenstein's 'seeing as.' I also turn to additional hermeneutic resources in Augustine, a principal figure in contemporary uses of liturgical frames. Observing Augustine's convergence with Ricoeur on metaphor, surplus meaning, and ways of seeing, I focus on his analysis of *tradition* and, especially, *desire* in informing meaning, particularly within liturgical contexts. Finally, I return to sport to observe that sport's liturgical constitution proceeds through sport as metaphor and that ideology and desire play an essential role in shaping how the metaphor of sport is seen, experienced, and loved.

2. Paul Ricoeur and Art Hermeneutics: Mimesis, Metaphor, and Play

Paul Ricoeur engages the task of understanding and interpreting poetic works throughout his corpus. A central problem with which he engages is their absence of "ostensive reference" (Ricoeur 1981, p. 139). That is, poetic works, such as in art, poetry, and narrative fiction, are not immediately about their external worlds. They do not overtly express anything of philosophical or ideological significance. Nevertheless, Ricoeur challenges purely 'internal' forms of poetic interpretation which bracket their external worlds and "rejec[t] any taking into account of reference" (Ricoeur 1984, p. 79). In contrast, Ricoeur works to show how poetic works refer to the world in their own way, exploring an essential relation between the 'world of a text' and the external world 'in front of the text' (Ricoeur 1981, pp. 93–106). To this end, Ricoeur develops an ontology of poetic works that is itself grounded in Hans-George Gadamer's analysis of art as play (*kunst as spiel*). But Ricoeur also extends Gadamer's analysis in his account of *mimesis* and metaphor, and these become the main lens through which he approaches meaning and reference in poetic works.

Hans-George Gadamer's seminal *Truth and Method* begins with an extended analysis of art and its interpretation. For Gadamer, a primary task is to provide an "ontological explanation" of art that observes its relation to its non-art world, and he proceeds to offer such an explanation through an analysis of play and a reclamation of the Aristotelian theory of *mimesis* (Gadamer 1975, p. 106). Gadamer turns to Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* to approach and interpret art. Particularly significant to Gadamer's analysis is that play is always of particular and recognizable kinds: it is "characteristic of human play that it plays

something" (Gadamer 1975, p. 111). Accordingly, Gadamer observes that the primary subject of play is not the players, but the game itself. To play a game, players relinquish freedom and surrender not only to the game's rules, but also to its "mood," "mental states," and general "spirit" (Gadamer 1975, p. 111). Players are free to choose whether or which game to play. But in entering a game, the play "absorbs the player into itself" and "holds a player in its spell" as players are themselves 'played by' the game (Gadamer 1975, pp. 109, 111).

With play always being the 'play of something', Gadamer approaches this 'something' by way of Aristotelian *mimesis*. Here, *mimesis* is not simply an 'imitation' or copy of an external reality not itself present (Plato) (Gadamer 1975, p. 123). Rather, what is essential to Aristotelian *mimesis* is 'presentation' itself: the presentation of something in play which is, in turn, recognizable (Gadamer 1975, p. 117; see also Nielsen 2021). *Mimesis* includes forms of 'representation' in which the content of play directly imitates non-play realities, such as a child's play of cars or dressing up. But it also includes 'non-representational' forms of presentation, such as the successful performance of game tasks (Gadamer 1975, pp. 112–3). In attending to what is presented in play and its relation to its non-play world, Gadamer makes two essential observations. On one hand, what is 'presented' (*mimesis*) in play is a "closed world"—one distinct and set apart from ordinary life (Gadamer 1975, p. 112). But on the other hand, what is presented is not "freely invent[ed]" and fully autonomous from its non-play world, since it could then not be found meaningful (Gadamer 1975, p. 134). Ancient tragedy, for instance, is limited in what it presents by that which might "have an effect" on its audience: we are "never simply swept away into a strange world" (Gadamer 1975, pp. 134–35).

Paul Ricoeur builds on and extends these Gadamerian conclusions. With Gadamer, Ricoeur grounds his account of poetic creation in play and Aristotelian *mimesis*. But Ricoeur also further develops these insights, particularly in his three-stage of account of poetic *mimesis* and analysis of metaphor. Here, Aristotelian *mimesis* is extended into the hermeneutic circle itself, and Ricoeur develops an account of *mimesis* in terms of the *prefiguration* (*mimesis*₁), *configuration* (*mimesis*₂), and *refiguration* (*mimesis*₃) of works.²

*Mimesis*₁ looks prior to poetic creation and to the significance of authors' *prefigurations* of their world. As Ricoeur observes, the act of configuring or presenting a work (*mimesis*) is rooted in a preunderstanding of the world's structural, symbolic, and temporal aspects (Ricoeur 1984, p. 54). That is, it is informed structurally by the accepted paradigms, customs, and rules regarding the internal features which constitute a work. It is informed symbolically by "the whole set of conventions, beliefs, and institutions that make up the symbolic framework of a culture" (Ricoeur 1984, p. 58). In addition, it is grounded in the basic phenomenological structures which comprise our inhabitation of time—structures elucidated by Augustine's phenomenology of time—and which include what Martin Heidegger calls *care*, an extension of Augustine's proto-phenomenology of desire (Ricoeur 1984, pp. 59–64).³

*Mimesis*₂ then involves the *configuration* or 'presentation' of poetic works, such as in art, poetry, or fiction. It entails an "open[ing to] the kingdom of the *as if*" and the "projection of a possible and inhabitable world" (Ricoeur 1984, p. 64; 2003, p. 106). It is the creation of something—the 'world' of a work—which invites interpretation. Such configurations of possible worlds are grounded in preunderstandings or *prefigurations* of the world (*mimesis*₁). Nevertheless, configuration is not simply imitation, but instead a "paradox" in which imitation and creation (*poesis*) are brought together (Ricoeur 2003, p. 44). Ricoeur, like Gadamer, appeals to ancient tragedy.

On the one hand, [*mimesis*] expresses a world of human actions which is already there; tragedy is destined to express human reality, to express the tragedy of life. But on the other hand, *mimesis* does not mean the duplication of reality; *mimesis* is not a copy: *mimesis* is *poesis*, that is, construction, creation. . . First, the fable is an original, coherent construction which attests to the creative genius of the artist. Second, tragedy is an imitation of human actions which makes them appear better, higher, more noble than they are in reality. (Ricoeur 1981, pp. 141–42)

In other words, poetic works present possible worlds, and these worlds are formed through a double process of imitation and creation, incorporating realities from its external world and constructing new possibilities through how it plays with such realities.⁴

Mimesis₃ is the completion of the hermeneutic circle in the *refiguration* of what is presented within its readers. It “marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader,” and it involves what Gadamer refers to as “application” and what Ricoeur more commonly describes as “appropriation” (Ricoeur 1981, pp. 144–56; 1984, pp. 70–71). Like mimesis₂, this *refiguration* or interpretation of a work is informed by particular *prefigurations* of the world (mimesis₁). At the same time, it opens to the expansion of one’s world through what is presented. I explore the role of the reader further below.

In all of these aspects, Ricoeur finds *metaphor* to be at the very heart of poetic *mimesis*. Taken literally, poetic works involve absurdities (Ricoeur 2003, p. 226). However, this does not mean they are without meaning or that they bear no relation to their external worlds. Rather, *mimesis* itself “is a kind of metaphor of reality” (Ricoeur 1981, p. 255). The “aim” of *mimesis* is “to compose an essential representation of human actions; its appropriate method is to speak the truth by means of fiction, fable, and tragic *muthos*” (Ricoeur 2003, p. 13). Precisely in holding together the paradox of imitation and *poiesis*, *mimesis* “holds together [a] closeness to human reality and the far-ranging flight of fable-making. . . [and] cannot but concern the theory of metaphor” (Ricoeur 2003, p. 44).

3. Sports and Fiction: *Mimesis*, Metaphor, and Play

Ricoeur’s account of poetic works also applies to sport. Like art, sport is rooted in play, and this play takes particular and recognizable forms (cricket, squash, etc.). Sport also involves, as Johan Huizinga observes, an inhabitable “second, poetic world” formed in the “as if” of play (Huizinga 1949, pp. 4, 32). What is perhaps less obvious—and which I clarify here—is that sporting worlds are also formed through the paradox of imitation and creation central to Aristotelian *mimesis* and, further, that they are rightly understood as ‘embodied metaphors.’ These less obvious aspects of sport are explored in Andrew Edgar’s reflections on sport and art and Scott Kretchmar’s analysis of sport and fiction, and I refer to their work here.

Drawing on Eugen Fink’s work on play, Scott Kretchmar observes that the play of sport “does not exhaust itself in a slavish reproduction . . . [It can have] the character of a creative transformation” (Kretchmar 2017a, p. 58; Fink 2016). In particular, he observes that as authors of fiction “tinker with actual stories” while also adopting poetic license, so “gamesmiths tinker with actual physical challenges while skillfully employing lusory license” (Kretchmar 2017a, p. 58). Fiction, for instance, can be “realistic” and “faithfully representative” of its non-fictional world, but it can also creatively transform its world in fantasy and fairy tales (Kretchmar 2017a, p. 60). Similarly, sport can be very ‘literal’ in such activities as “swimming, archery, [and] javelin throwing” or more creative in sports such as baseball (Kretchmar 2017a, p. 60). Imitation and transformation also inform the narratives developed in fiction and sport. Just as fiction plays with the comedy and tragedy of “a protagonist’s efforts to secure, usually at some cost, what he or she desires,” sport plays with this comedy and tragedy through its trials and obstacles and endings in either victory or defeat (Kretchmar 2017a, p. 61).

Andrew Edgar similarly observes that sports’ worlds are formed through this double operation of imitation and creation. He argues that sport “may ‘speak as world’ because it takes the materials, ideas and fundamental experiences of our cultural existence, and plays with them” (Edgar 2016, p. 8). Following Theodor Adorno’s analysis of music, Edgar observes that just as “there is nothing in the art work that is not derived from the non-artistic world, but equally nothing that is not transformed, once it is part of the art work,” so too “sportworlds” are formed through this play of derivation and transformation (Edgar 2016, pp. 30–54, 157). Specifically, Edgar observes that sports can draw on and play with a variety of non-sporting realities, which include not only physical materials and ways

of relating to time and space, but also realities of human agency, finitude, and contingency, as well as our relations to “chance, fate, and providence” (Edgar 2016, pp. 158–61).

These relations of Aristotelian *mimesis* to sport point towards an ontology of sport as embodied metaphor. Andrew Edgar highlights the significance of sport as metaphor in observing Seneca’s interpretation of the gladiatorial games as a “metaphor for life” and Heraclitus’ interpretation of wrestling as a “metaphor for the cosmos” (Edgar 2016, pp. 68, 73). Scott Kretchmar’s reflections on human evolution and the origins of games also explore the significance of sport as metaphor. He finds the cognitive development of “metaphorical thinking” to be an essential breakthrough in the development of sport and proposes that our ancestors saw metaphorical links between, for instance, fighting and the play of wrestling, spear hunting and “hitting an artificial target,” and fleeing from danger and “racing a fellow tribesman” (Kretchmar 2017b, 2018, p. 56). Kretchmar’s reflections on the 2010 Masters Golf Tournament further suggest that sport, like fiction, can be read as a metaphor. The tournament featured Tiger Woods in his “first tournament after a long and lurid sex scandal” and Phil Michelson, “whose mother and wife were both battling cancer” (Kretchmar 2017a, p. 63). Here, the “announcers shaped a narrative in which every missed put or crushed drive was intensely meaningful thanks to these bigger stories,” the game itself, as metaphor, mediating a story of overcoming these non-sport trials (Kretchmar 2017a, p. 63).

4. Metaphor and the Central Problem of Sport Hermeneutics

With this understanding of sport in relation to *mimesis*, metaphor, and play, we can now address some essential relations between sport and liturgy. Similar to sport, the rites and rituals of liturgy are commonly understood to be grounded in play. As Joseph Ratzinger observes, a liturgy, as a game, “has its own rules, sets up its own world, which is in force from the start of play but then, of course, is suspended at the close of play” (Ratzinger 2000, p. 13). It is also evident that both sport and liturgy involve forms of embodied and ritual performance that make use of metaphors and symbols. As Ricoeur observes, symbols not only bear a close relation to metaphor; they can be considered a subset of metaphor (Ricoeur 1976, pp. 45–69).

However, in approaching sport’s liturgical constitution through metaphor, we confront a central problem which must be addressed. In particular, we approach the problem of the ‘reference’ or ‘aboutness’ of metaphor. Sport, as metaphor, does not immediately ‘refer’ or speak ‘about’ its non-sporting world. It does not directly mediate a particular ideology or cultural horizon.

Paul Ricoeur expounds this problem of reference via the work of Hans Frege. He argues that the problem is that poetic works, as metaphors, have *sense* (i.e., a ‘what’), but lack ostensive *reference* (an ‘about what’) (Ricoeur 1981, pp. 133–43; 2003, pp. 84–86). That is, poetic works, like fiction, have content: they have a ‘world’ or “internal organization,” which allows them to be followed and which opens to them to structural explanation (Ricoeur 2003, p. 5). However, they lack any direct “reference...to a reality outside,” making no descriptive claims about their external world which might be regarded as true or false (Ricoeur 2003, p. 5). It should be clarified that our problem here is not simply one of a poetic work’s relation to its external world, for we have seen that poetic works incorporate and play with such external realities. Rather, our problem is that poetic works, including sport and fiction, do not directly describe or state anything ‘about’ their non-fictional worlds. They have no immediate relation to external ideologies and philosophies. Accordingly, Ricoeur observes that “the possibility that metaphorical discourse says something about reality collides with the apparent constitution of poetic discourse, which seems to be essentially non-referential and centred on itself” (Ricoeur 2003, p. 5).

Several sports scholars have wrestled with this absence of ostensive reference in sport, as Andrew Edgar, in particular, has observed (Edgar 2016, p. 40, 102). David Best, for instance, claims that sport does not provide “the possibility of the expression of a conception of life issues, such as contemporary moral, social and political problems” (Best 1978, p. 117).

For Best, “the very notion of a *subject* of sport makes no sense” (Best 1978, p. 122). Such conclusions are echoed in the work of Gumbrecht, who claims that “athletic competitions do not express anything and therefore do not offer anything to read” (Gumbrecht 2006, p. 68).

Ricoeur’s response to this problem proceeds through observing that metaphor has a form of signification different from that of scientific and descriptive language. In particular, Ricoeur observes that poetic language, as metaphor, has what he calls a “surplus of meaning” (Ricoeur 1976, pp. 45–69). It has not only a “primary” or “literal” level of signification, but also a “secondary signification,” namely, a figurative aspect of meaning beyond that of its initial level (Ricoeur 1976, p. 47). Furthermore, while first-order levels of signification within metaphor do not directly refer to the world ‘in front’ of it, they nevertheless open to additional levels of signification, which can indeed be seen as referring to their external worlds.

Ricoeur calls this secondary reference of a work its ‘metaphorical reference’: “Poetic works refe[r] to the world in their own specific way, that of metaphorical reference. . . [this] consists in the fact that the effacement of descriptive reference—an effacement that, as a first approximation, makes language refer to itself—is revealed to be, in a second approximation, the negative condition for freeing a more radical power of reference” (Ricoeur 1984, p. 80).⁵ Here, the paradox of mimesis is, again, at the heart of Ricoeur’s understanding.

Why do poets write tragedies, elaborate fables, use ‘unusual’ words such as metaphors? Because tragedy itself is connected to a more fundamental human project, that of imitating human actions in a poetic way. With these two keywords—*mimesis* and *poiesis*—we reach the level which I have called the referential world of the work. Indeed we may say that the Aristotelian concept of *mimesis* already encompasses all of the paradoxes of reference. . . . Could we not say that *mimesis* is the Greek term for what we have called the non-ostensive [metaphorical] reference of the literary work. (Ricoeur 1981, p. 141)

In other words, metaphorical reference is itself part of the play of Aristotelian *mimesis*. Poetic metaphors are metaphors of their external worlds and, accordingly, they cannot but ‘refer’ to their external worlds, albeit in this unique and non-ostensive way. Ricoeur observes that the very act of composing fiction involves a “redescription of reality” by way of poetic language (Ricoeur 1981, p. 104). Accordingly, “metaphorical redescription and mimesis are closely bound up with each other, to the point that we can exchange the two vocabularies” (Ricoeur 1984, p. xi).

Drawing on this account of metaphorical reference, Ricoeur returns to the question of a poetic work’s capacity to speak or ‘refer’ to its external world. Fiction, for instance, while descriptively false, is seen to bear an essential relation to the truths of its non-fiction world, for “by its mimetic intention, the world of fiction leads us to the heart of the real world of action” (Ricoeur 1981, p. 258). In this restored relation of fiction to its real world, Ricoeur embraces the Aristotelian conclusion that “poetry is more philosophical than history” (Ricoeur 1981, p. 58; Ricoeur 2003, p. 44). While history is tied largely to the “contingent” and “anecdotal,” poetic works can bypass these and advance immediately to the “essential” and “universal” (Ricoeur 1981, p. 258).⁶ As a result, what is presented in fiction is directly informed by particular *prefigurations* of what is true (*mimesis*₁), including realities of ideological significance.

It is in this way that works of fiction are commonly understood to be capable of mediating particular ideologies and narrative horizons. George Orwell’s *1984*, for instance, does not speak directly of our world, but the fact that it mediates a critique of totalitarian society is unmistakable. Similarly, the world of J.R.R Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, while not directly espousing any particular philosophy, nevertheless bears the crater-marks of the Christian gospel. In both texts, fictional worlds are formed within particular *prefigurations* (*mimesis*₁); they metaphorically refer to specific non-fiction worlds (*mimesis*₂) and, thus, mediate these non-fictional worlds in being read (*mimesis*₃).

Andrew Edgar's sports hermeneutics suggests that sport can be approached along similar lines. Against accounts which deny any 'reference' or 'aboutness' in sport, Edgar argues that sport's capacity to "speak as a world" includes "thinking about philosophical problems, about what it is to be human and what the human condition is" (Edgar 2016, p. 6).⁷ Like Ricoeur, he argues that sport, as a 'representation' (like art), "must in some way be about the world, so that it is the world of which the representation is true" (Edgar 2016, p. 15). As an example, Edgar turns to E.F. Kaelin's rejection of baseball as America's national game, and his suggestion that American football is more fitting. Edgar argues that Kaelin can make this claim because baseball and American football 'speak' as different worlds, and therefore mediate different values. "Conceivably," Edgar notes, Kaelin "aspires to a different world than the one of which baseball speaks—possibly to a different vision of what it is to be American" (Edgar 2016, p. 158).

Interpretations of sport as liturgy commonly proceed similarly. For instance, Michael Novak's analysis of baseball, football, and basketball—his "holy trinity" of American sports—interprets the distinct worlds of each sport in relation to the worlds of American subcultures (Novak 1976). Baseball expresses the "rural American myth," American football the "immigrant myth and the corporate myth," and basketball the African American myth, as "jazz." In each case, Novak finds particular realities within sport to refer to their non-sport worlds and to accordingly mediate these cultural values in and through sport's being played. A similar argument underpins Varda Burstyn's *The Rites of Men* (Burstyn 1999). She argues that the values internal to many sports, particularly those of collision and combat sports, are informed by gendered myths of heroic virtue, and that such values are in turn perpetuated and reinforced through sport's "ritual practice" (Burstyn 1999, p. 20).

However, there are issues in approaching sport's liturgical constitution in such a direct manner.⁸ I do not deny that particular ideologies, myths, and values of communities play an essential role in shaping the rules and practices of sports' worlds. Nor do I question the notion that sport, in turn, commonly mediates such myths and values in its spectacles and its being played. Rather, I simply observe that metaphor has a surplus of meaning. Even when it is apparent that a particular ideology has shaped the 'sense' or internal content of a sport, it does not follow that such values are necessarily mediated.

Poetic works, as Ricoeur observes, have a "unity of structure and hence of sense, but no unity of reference" (Ricoeur 1981, p. 251). The surplus of meaning in poetic works opens to polysemy and, thus, to an array of possible and appropriate referents. Two primary principles of poetic interpretation are to be observed. The "principle of congruence" ensures an agreement between the world of a metaphor and its meaning: a metaphor cannot simply mean anything (Ricoeur 1981, p. 138). But poetic interpretation must also observe the principle of "plenitude": "the poem means all that it can mean" (Ricoeur 1981, p. 138). That is, the world of poetic texts is not a single reference, but "is the totality of references opened up by texts" (Ricoeur 1981, p. 139). Sport, precisely as metaphor, opens to several possible referents. Furthermore, given the relative simplicity of sport's worlds compared to those of fiction, its polysemy is perhaps more pronounced.⁹

Such considerations lead, then, to the role of the reader or player in sport's liturgical constitution and appropriation (mimesis₃). Crucially, Ricoeur highlights that 'reference' in visual metaphors proceeds only through ways of seeing, directly appealing to Wittgenstein's 'seeing as': "to explicate a metaphor is to enumerate all the appropriate senses in which the vehicle is 'seen as' the tenor" (Ricoeur 2003, p. 251).¹⁰ 'Seeing-as,' made famous by Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit analogy, is "the intuitive relationship that makes the sense and image [i.e., referent] hold together" (Ricoeur 2003, p. 251). Here, a "resemblance" between vehicle and tenor overcomes referential ambiguity and makes forms of 'seeing as' possible (Ricoeur 2003, pp. 204–54). In clarifying his meaning, Ricoeur identifies this 'seeing as' as simply a corollary of the 'being-as' of metaphor. That is, a metaphor both "is" and "is not" the reality to which it is seen to refer, and it acquires its 'being-as' its referent precisely through its being 'seen as' such a referent (Ricoeur 2003, pp. 62–70, 302). As Ricoeur summarizes: "This articulating of a metaphorical reference on the metaphorical sense

cannot be clothed with a full ontological meaning unless we go so far as to metaphorize the verb “to be” itself and recognize in “being-as” the correlate of “seeing-as”, in which is summed up the work of metaphor” (Ricoeur 1984, p. 80).

What requires further inquiry and clarification, then, is how such ‘ways of seeing’ and experiencing sport are informed by their readers’ *prefigurations* of their worlds (*mimesis*₁), including such realities as cultural symbols, grand narratives, and *care*, as Ricoeur identifies. Given that sport is not only watched and understood but loved and celebrated, it is evident that cares and desires play an essential role of sport’s liturgical appropriation. However, the relation between *desire* and interpretation is not well developed in Ricoeur’s work, and we accordingly depart from Ricoeur here and turn to Augustine (see also Ward 2005, p. 138). In Augustine, we find the role of desire explored directly, including its relation to the liturgical constitution of spectacles.

5. Augustinian Hermeneutics: Signs, Desire, and Ways of Seeing

Paul Ricoeur’s work is deeply influenced by Augustine and many of his contributions, including those on surplus meaning and ways of seeing, are anticipated in Augustine. Here, I introduce Augustine’s hermeneutics and semiotics and show how Augustine responds to similar problems of ambiguity in interpretation. For Augustine, both *desire* and *tradition* are seen to play an essential role in discerning the referents of texts, and these considerations are the foundations for his liturgical interpretation of spectacles.

Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana* is a seminal text in hermeneutics and semiotics. Martin Heidegger (1999, p. 9) refers to it as the first hermeneutics work “in the grand style” and many consider it the first genuine work in semiotics (Todorov 1982, p. 40). Here, Augustine develops a theory of signs which he then uses to interpret both culture and Scripture. His semiotics splits the world into two categories: signs (*signa*) and things (*res*). He defines signs as “things which are used to signify something else” (Augustine 1996, *De Doctrina Christiana* [subsequently DDC], 1.2.2.). Further, a sign is a “thing, which besides the impression it conveys to the senses, also has the effect of making something else come to mind” (DDC, 2.1.1). Signs can be natural (*naturalia*), such as smoke being a sign of fire, or given (*data*), such as how facial expressions are a sign of emotions (DDC, 2.1.2, 2.2.3). ‘Given’ signs can, in turn, also be literal (*signa propria*) or metaphorical (*signa translata*) (DDC, 2.10.15).

Essential to Augustine’s semiotics—“the key to Augustine’s entire hermeneutic theory”—is the relation he develops between sign, signified, and the sign’s user (Markus 1995, p. 103). Rather than a ‘dyadic’ semiotics of signifier and signified (like De Saussure’s structuralist semiotics), Augustine offers a ‘triadic’ semiotics similar to the pragmatic semiotics of Charles Sanders Pierce through the inclusion of the *users* of signs (Markus 1957; Pecknold 2005, pp. 40–41).¹¹ For Augustine, a sign does not merely mean something. Rather, “a sign¹ must mean something² to someone³,” with the sign’s user playing an essential role in its meaning (Pecknold 2005, p. 56). Augustine develops this triadic relation by integrating his analysis of use and enjoyment into his semiotics: “the distinction between *frui* and *uti* is thus superimposed on the *res*—*signum* distinction” (Williams 1989, p. 139). Here, as Rowan Williams observes, Augustine accordingly “links what he has to say about language [signs] with what he has to say about beings who ‘mean’ and about the fundamentally desirous nature of those beings—a link which is undoubtedly the most original and interesting feature of the treatise” (Williams 1989, p. 139).

Desire is significant to Augustine’s semiotics because it is the foundation of *use*. For Augustine, either we use the things of the world in the love of God and neighbor (*caritas*), or we use them through misdirected and disordered desires (*cupitas*) (DDC, 1.1.1–1.4.4; O’Donovan 1982). Similarly, signs are not only understood but used through particular desires. In *Confessions*, Augustine notes that upon learning the signs of language as a child through others’ pointing towards things and naming them, he “used them to express [his] own desire” (*Confessions*, 1.8).¹²

This inclusion of *use* in Augustine's semiotics opens it to multiple orders of signification. As Robert Markus observes: "A sign is a 'thing' standing within the signifying relation between a subject, the sign itself, and the signified object. The latter [signified object] in its turn can be, or become, a sign when drawn into a further relationship of signification" (Markus 1995, p. 103). In other words, the use and meaning of signs can proceed on additional levels of signification, and it is precisely such levels that inform Augustine's approach to metaphorical or 'transferred' signs (*signa translata*). As Markus notes: "Transferred signs... are quite simply signs whose signified are placed into a second relationship of signification: they occur when things signified by their proper literal names (*propriis uerbis*) are in their turn used to signify something else" (Markus 1995, p. 103). Augustine offers the example of the word 'ox,' which is used literally to signify the animal, but also figuratively to refer to the evangelist (DDC, 2.10.15). This same pattern of relations, however, is central to and evident throughout Augustine's interpretation of signs. In approaching spiritual interpretation, for instance, Augustine finds that the church's interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures is not limited to its first-level signification or 'literal' sense. Rather, its signs can be drawn into secondary levels of signification when read in relation to the new covenant, and can accordingly refer to Christ through its allegorical reading (DDC, 3.5.9–6.10; Markus 1995, p. 104).

In his description of signs' capacity to have additional levels of signification, Augustine anticipates Paul Ricoeur's 'surplus of meaning,' as Ricoeur himself recognizes (Ricoeur 1989, p. 12; Cameron 2012, p. 208). Signs can have multiple and disparate meanings according to their use within divergent relations of signification, and this leads to ambiguity and polysemy in their referents. Such considerations directly inform Augustine's analysis of human culture and its institutions. Augustine contrasts "natural" and "cultural" institutions (*instituta*), and among the latter, he further distinguishes "superstitious" and "non-superstitious" institutions (DDC, 2.20.30–2.22.34). "Superstitious" institutions are those which are inherently tied to pagan worship. By contrast, "non-superstitious" institutions can be used by both heavenly and earthly cities. Among "non-superstitious" institutions, Augustine includes the cultural activities of art, dance, and fiction, as well as customs of clothing, scales of measurement, philosophy, and language itself. They are "those institutions which are a value to human beings living together in groups in the pursuit of the needs of this life" (DDC, 2.39.58). They tend to have conventional or agreed referents that are shared across earthly and heavenly cities.

Augustine, however, also observes ambiguity within many such signs, as well as their capacity for different referents in accordance with different uses and ways of being seen. For instance, some signs, such as objects placed on one's body or medications to be consumed, can refer either to acts of superstition or to true medicine. As Markus observes, "Augustine seems to treat such signs as capable of belonging to two different languages" (Markus 1995, p. 105). Similarly, in Augustine's use of ballet dancing as an example of conventional or instituted meaning, he observes that its meaning is largely ambiguous because "a thing can *resemble* [emphasis added] something else in many ways" (DDC, 2.39.58). Nevertheless, "they *look for* [emphasis added] some kind of likeness, as far as possible, between the signs themselves and the things being signified" (DDC, 2.25.38).

Here, Augustine also anticipates Ricoeur's account of visual metaphor through resemblance and 'seeing as.' Ambiguity is overcome through discerning a sign's uses and ways of being seen. Such considerations of 'ways of seeing' also directly inform Augustine's analysis of Scripture. Book 3 of *De Doctrina Christiana* focuses on ambiguity and polysemy in the interpretation of Scripture. Augustine's analysis begins at the level of the 'proper' or 'literal' sense of interpretation, providing direction over obscure words, phrasings, and pronunciations (DDC, 3.1.1–3.4.8). Augustine anticipates a broad convergence across traditions on the meaning or reference of the literal sense and finds cases of unresolved ambiguity "extremely rare" once the appropriate exegetical tools are applied (DDC, 3.4.8). Ambiguities of reference along metaphorical or figurative lines, however, are approached differently and are found to be more difficult due to the greater openness in their possible

referents. In particular, Augustine has the spiritual interpretation of scripture in mind, and he provides direction with respect to when signs are to be interpreted figuratively, and guidance around the possibilities of meaning once it is established that a sign is to be read figuratively (DDC, 3.5.9–3.37.55).

Augustine nevertheless recognized that his general guidelines were unable resolve several scriptural ambiguities, and he famously offered two primary rules to ensure the appropriate use and interpretation of Scripture: the rule of charity (*regula caritas*) and the rule of faith (*regula fidei*) (DDC, 1.35.39–1.36.41, 3.2.2–3.2.3). One's interpretation of difficult and obscure passages should be in agreement with the central teaching and ultimate reference of Scripture: the love of God and the love of neighbor (rule of charity). Additionally, one's reading should agree with a tradition of teachings which are "received from the plainer passages of scripture and from the authority of the Church" (rule of faith) (DDC, 3.2.2). Provided one has followed the exegetical guidelines and has observed these two rules, Augustine concludes that one can interpret an ambiguous passage "in any of the ways that are open" (DDC, 3.2.5). That is, the ambiguous sign can be 'read' or 'seen' in many ways. However, some boundaries around referents and ways of seeing are provided here, and these boundaries are set both by a *tradition* and by a particular understanding of what is to be *loved* and *desired*.

For Augustine, one's loves and desires play a significant role in one's openness to particular readings. For instance, he argues that the love of temporal realities over and above spiritual realities prevents many from being open to spiritual interpretation (DDC, 3.8.12–3.9.13). Similarly, he argues that Christological readings depend on the appropriate ordering of desire and the will: only those "who do not seek in pride" can "spiritually" understand the Hebrew Scriptures (De Catechizandis Rudibus, 4.8.9; Dawson 1995, p. 133). The liturgical context of scripture's interpretation is also significant here. The public reading of scripture should offer a "sweetest and most sacred spectacle" (*suauissima et sacratissima spectacular*) (Epistle 27; see Stock 1996, p. 129). That is, its reading should reveal divine beauty and offer models of virtue that are not only understood, but *loved*. Accordingly, those with loves and ideas of virtue in conflict with Scripture are unable to accept the world to which the Scriptures refer. Augustine regularly finds the desires of his philosophical rivals to be the root causes of their rejection of Christ, particularly in relation to the humility of Christ's incarnation and the way of the cross (see Augustine 1890, De Civitas Dei, 10.28–29).

The resources of this hermeneutic underpin Augustine's interpretation of public spectacles and the discernment of their liturgical dimensions.¹³ His sermons are filled with references to and warnings about the ancient spectacles and theater, and he directly contrasts them with the liturgies of the church. In *City of God*, Augustine counters the Roman philosopher Varro's separation of the 'fabulous' theology used by the poets in the theaters from the civil theology used by the general public (Augustine 1890, De Civitas Dei, 6.5–6.7). Instead, Augustine observes that what is presented and celebrated in pagan *mimesis* and its spectacles is itself caught up with its myths and desires. The spectacles are liturgical as 'theaters of virtue,' offering particular images of what should be loved and emulated (Augustine 1890, De Civitas Dei, 1.32; Herdt 2008, 2012).

A common issue for Augustine is that what is celebrated is not true virtue, but its obscene perversion, and this is understood to have disastrous and deformative consequences for society. Augustine, for instance, notes that the Roman spectacles were commanded by the gods for the public's licentious behaviors to be imitated and celebrated in stadiums and amphitheaters.

If, then, the deities were veritably fighting with one another, the civil wars of men are sufficiently justified. . . . in these entertainments the poetical compositions and actions of the drama ascribed such iniquities to the gods, that every one might safely imitate them, whether he believed the gods had actually done such things, or, not believing this, yet perceived that they most eagerly desired to be represented as having done them. (Augustine 1890, De Civitas Dei, 2.25)

Nevertheless, although Augustine is concerned about the content that is presented pagan *mimesis*, the true meaning of spectacles is found only by attending to *desire*. Reflecting on his own experiences at the theater, Augustine is troubled by the pleasure he experienced in pitying the misfortunes of others in tragic drama. He is concerned that such imaginary pity becomes disconnected from true pity, and that “because we enjoy pitying others, we welcome their misfortunes.” While true compassion “flows from the stream of friendship,” Augustine questions where such theatrical compassion then leads. “Does it run into a bubbling whirlpool of pitch, a monstrous cauldron of foul lusts. . . twisted and cast down from heavenly serenity by its own impetus?” He worries that the meaning of tragic theatre is found in twisted and depraved forms of desire (Confessions 3.2; Herdt 2012, p. 116).

The centrality of desire is also seen in Augustine’s account of his friend Alypius’ attendance of the gladiatorial games. Here, it is not perverse compassion with which Augustine takes issue, but a “lust for cruelty” and pleasure found directly in others’ sufferings. Augustine notes how Alypius was dragged to the games by the “friendly violence” (*familiari violentia*) of his companions. Alypius intends to keep his eyes closed, but the roar of the crowd piques his curiosity, and despite his confidence that he will be repulsed by what he will see, his soul is instead “struck down.” Augustine writes: “When he saw the blood, it was as though he had drunk a deep draught of savage passion. . . He revelled in the wickedness of the fighting and was drunk with the fascination of bloodshed. He was no longer the man who had come to the arena, but simply one of the crowd” (Confessions, 6.8).

However, as Herdt asks, “If watching violent death in the gladiatorial arena poses such dire danger to the soul, how is it that holy spectacles that bring the violent deaths of the martyrs before the eyes of Christians can be cleansing to the soul?” (Herdt 2012, p. 121). Augustine engages this question directly in his sermons commemorating the birthday of Saint Vincent. He presents Saint Vincent’s martyrdom as “a marvelous spectacle. . . the wicked judge, the blood-thirsty torturer, the invincible martyr, a contest between cruelty and piety” (Augustine 1990, Sermon 277a). In continuity with his liturgical tradition, Augustine reveres Saint Vincent as one of God’s true athletes and true victors. But “who would want to see an executioner at his savage work. . . Who could fail to be horrified?” (Augustine 1990, Sermon 277a). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Augustine’s answer unfolds through two different ways of seeing this violent event. One way is perverse and sadistic, taking pleasure in the violence itself. The other is holy and informed by “the eyes of faith” (Augustine 1990, Sermon 277a):¹⁴

In a word, our interest in one and the same spectacle is quite different from that of the persecutor. He was enjoying the martyr’s punishment, we its cause; he was taking pleasure in what he was suffering, we in why he was suffering; he in his torments, we in his strength; he in his wounds, we in his crown; he, because his pains were lasting such a long time; we, because he was not being broken by them in the least; he, because he was being ill-treated in the flesh; we, because he was abiding in the faith. (Augustine 1990, Sermon 277a)

In other words, ‘one and the same spectacle’ can produce very different meanings, according to how it is seen and what is loved. Ambiguity is here again resolved through ways of seeing that are directly informed by desire. For Augustine, the justice and courage of St. Vincent was “making all this horror beautiful” (Augustine 1990, Sermon 277a). This stands in direct contrast to the perverse desires and images of virtue presented in ancient spectacles.

6. Metaphor, Desire, and the Liturgies of Sport

Drawing on these hermeneutic resources in Ricoeur and Augustine, we return to sport. While several examples showing these considerations in modern sport could be provided, I offer but a few brief examples here. I note two common liturgical interpretations of sport, namely as a mediator of capitalism and imperial masculinity and a less common interpretation that draws on distinctly Augustinian motifs.

Jean Marie Brohm interprets modern sport as a ritual and spectacle that mirrors capitalistic society. For Brohm (1978, p. 178) “economic competition is presented metaphysically as an eternal given, whose playful representation is sport.” Here it is meritocratic virtue that is desired and celebrated: “The champions are the positive heroes of the system those who buy their own efforts and labourers have succeeded in claiming the rungs of the social ladder” (Brohm 1978, p. 178). Accordingly, the winners plant “salv[ific]... illusions in the possibility of social advancement” and so “justify and reinforce the social hierarchy” (Brohm 1978, p. 178). Jean-François Morissette approaches sport from a similar perspective. He observes that “today’s sports scene is dominated by a conception of excellence based on hierarchy, individual merit, and record settings that prolongs, reproduces, and translates the values and ethics of market liberalism and economic competition” (Morissette 2014, p. 385). Further, he interprets sport as mirroring class struggles for economic dominance. Sport is a “theatre of class struggle” in which “to excel in sport is to defeat and dominate others” (Morissette 2014, p. 385).

Burstyn (1999, p. 20), by contrast, approaches and interprets modern sport along the lines of “a great gendered master narrative of the imperial age.” As a “secular sacrament,” she argues, sport’s rituals “sustai[n] a mythology—a set of story-beliefs about society and the cosmos—that is ideologically laden” (Burstyn 1999, pp. 18, 20). She traces this mythology across the lines of capitalism and socialism to a particular vision of heroic masculinity:

The rites of sport create value-bearing mythologies around particular kinds of heroic figures: large strong, often violent, record-setting champions. The sport culture related to these rites shares with them a supralinguistic but clearly coded symbolic system that embodies a template of values—‘manly’ values—as social values. (Burstyn 1999, p. 22)

Here, ideal athletes are “constructed as symbolic warriors” and are, in turn, honored for their acts of symbolic violence and domination within sport (Burstyn 1999, p. 43). Further, they are revered as the “demigods of the ‘national psyche’” (Burstyn 1999, p. 25).

For Michael Novak (1976, pp. 18–34), by contrast, sport is a ‘natural religion’ offering an imperfect expression of a common religious spirit. Here, the trials of sport mirror the trials and *agon* of life’s journey. Struggle itself is “the classic form of life,” and Novak locates the competition of sport alongside “the voyages of Ulysses, the trials of Hercules... [and] Pilgrim’s Progress” (Novak 1976, p. 8). The restlessness of the human heart is actualized in desires for self-transcendence and sports are accordingly “built upon *ascesis*,” and the “development of character through patterns of self-denial, repetition, and experiment” (Novak 1976, p. 29). Sport itself offers “an experience of at least a pagan sense of godliness... driv[ing] one in some dark and generic sense ‘godward’” (Novak 1976, p. 101). As expressions of redemptive desire, sports, such as American football, can even offer “liturg[ies] of liberation... the pleasure of the game comes from breaking through” (Novak 1976, p. 101). Further, sport discloses the human struggle for life in the face of death (with victory seen as life, and defeat as death), thus offering an imperfect expression of the Christian Eucharist (Novak 1976, p. 21).

It should be evident that all three of these liturgical appropriations of sport can be played and experienced within the same spectacle, and yet we have very different interpretations of what sport is about. It should therefore also be evident that what we are witnessing in this polysemy of liturgical appropriation is less a mediation of values that are internal to particular sports, and more an expression of diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the embodied metaphor of sport, which are directly informed by the desires, ideologies, and cultural traditions of which sport is a part. In essence, we are seeing that sport, as metaphor, can ‘refer’ to and mediate a variety of non-sporting worlds according to the contexts, ‘languages,’ and second-order relations into which it is brought and the desires through which it is engaged and played. Here, the images of virtue and desires of domination (*libido dominandi*) that animate sport’s appropriation along capitalist and hypermasculine lines stand in stark contrast to the restless and self-transcending desire

presented in Novak's liturgical interpretation of sport. The core difference is in how sport is used, seen, and loved.

To observe this in sport is not to claim that sport is inherently or necessarily liturgical. Nor is it to deny that sport is a unique set of values. As Hans-Georg Gadamer observes, there is always a particular 'something' at play in sport, and this 'something' continues to carry within itself unique metaphorical potentialities in accordance with the principle of congruence previously identified. As Andrew Edgar observes, boxing can metaphorically refer to the struggle between the Nazis and the Allies, while the game of bowls cannot (Edgar 2016, p. 162). My contention is simply that sport, as metaphor, contains surplus meaning, that this surplus opens it to a variety of interpretations and appropriations, and that sport can accordingly mediate diverse and even competing ideologies in accordance with how it is used and seen.

7. Concluding Notes

While I have only sketched this Ricoeurian and Augustinian framing of sport, its implications are nevertheless significant. The observations I have presented can provide greater clarity around the relations of the internal and external worlds of sport. They can advance a foundation for a more holistic interpretation of sport that discerns the myriad ways in which sport mediates the cultural horizons of which it is a part. Several analyses of sport already approach the framework offered here, including those that recognize the differences in meaning between mutual-striving and military metaphors of sport competition. My argument, however, invites us to also explore the secondary relations of signification of which these metaphors can be a part and, accordingly, the different ways in which these metaphors can be used, seen, and loved.

The observations I have presented also suggest that the redemption of sport may lie less in the transformation of its internal structures and more in alternative ways of 'reading' or appropriating sport. Following Augustine, in my forthcoming work, I discern the antithesis of his 'two cities' in the contrast between Novak's interpretation and the aforementioned liturgies of domination. I also begin to explore what more redemptive ways of seeing and using the metaphor of sport—ways informed by the 'eyes of faith' and a restless love of God—might involve.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ While I focus on the significance of metaphor within sport's liturgical appropriation, the Ricoeurian and Augustinian analysis I present is equally a contribution to sports hermeneutics in general. Many works within this body of research approach the argument I present here, particularly those that engage with semiotics and the significance of metaphor (Kretchmar 2000; Wagg et al. 2009; Wells 2014). Nevertheless, there remains a discernable gap in adequately addressing the role of metaphor and desire within the meanings of sport.
- ² Ricoeur develops these primarily in relation to narrative. In this way, his scope includes poetic creation, and fiction in particular. See also Ricoeur (1981, pp. 144–56).
- ³ I observe the relation between Heideggerian *care* and Augustine's analysis of desire in a forthcoming work.
- ⁴ Ricoeur positions his account close to Nelson Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking* and *Languages of Art* (Ricoeur 1980).
- ⁵ For Ricoeur, this second-order reference is the "primordial reference": it is "poetic discourse [which] allows our deep-seated insertion in the life-world to emerge; it allows the ontological tie uniting our being to other beings and to Being to be articulated" (Ricoeur 1978, p. 9).
- ⁶ Here, Ricoeur challenges Nelson Goodman's exclusion of truth from 'rightness' or 'fitness'. See (Ricoeur 1980).
- ⁷ Edgar draws on art philosopher Arthur C. Danto (1981).
- ⁸ I do not mean to suggest that Andrew Edgar interprets sport without taking metaphor into account.
- ⁹ Our previous examples of Orwell's and Tolkien's fiction appear quite limited in terms of the possible ideologies and non-fiction worlds they can reasonably mediate. This appears to be because their fictional worlds and narratives are quite detailed and

developed. By contrast, sport's relative simplicity—its presentation of forms of striving (*agon*) and excellence (*arete*) in various degrees and through various styles—can open to a multitude of meanings and referents.

10 Ricoeur here appeals to Marcus B. Hester (1967).

11 Augustine also anticipates a number of core themes in the late Wittgenstein. For instance, see Smith (2014).

12 Translation from Wittgenstein (1953, §1).

13 Hans-George Gadamer's analysis of theater (Gadamer 1986) similarly observes its continuity with religion.

14 Augustine similarly contrasts "materially-minded" and "spiritually-minded" ways of seeing these spectacles of martyrs. See Castelli (2007, p. 105).

References

- Augustine. 1890. *St. Augustine's City of God and Christian Doctrine*. Translated by Marcus Dods. Edited by Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
- Augustine. 1990. *Sermons*, III/8. Translated by Edmund Hill. Edited by John E. Rotelle. New York: New City Press.
- Augustine. 1996. *Teaching Christianity (De Doctrina Christiana)*. Edited by Rotelle John E. Translated by Edmund Hille. Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Hyde Park: New City Press.
- Best, David. 1978. *Philosophy and Human Movement*. London: Allen&Unwin.
- Brohm, Jean-Marie. 1978. *Sport, a Prison of Measured Time: Essays*. London: Ink Links Ltd.
- Burstyn, Varda. 1999. *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Cameron, Michael. 2012. Augustine and Scripture. In *A Companion to Augustine*. Edited by Mark Vessey. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Castelli, Elizabeth A. 2007. *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Danto, Arthur C. 1981. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Dawson, David. 1995. Sign, Allegory, and the Motions of the Soul. In *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*. Edited by Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Edgar, Andrew. 2012. Sport as Liturgy: Towards a Radical Orthodoxy of Sport. *Studies in Christian Ethics* 25: 20–34. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Edgar, Andrew. 2016. *Sport and Art: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Sport*. London: Routledge.
- Fink, Eugen. 2016. *Play as Symbol of the World*. Translated by Ian Alexander Moore, and Christopher Turner. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1975. *Truth and Method*. New York: Sheed & Ward.
- Gadamer, Hans Georg. 1986. *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. Edited by Robert Bernasconi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumbrecht, Hans U. 2006. *In Praise of Athletic Beauty*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Harvey, Lincoln. 2014. *A Brief Theology of Sport*. London: SCM Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1999. *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. Translated by John van Buren. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Herd, Jennifer A. 2008. *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Herd, Jennifer A. 2012. The Theater of the Virtues: Augustine's Critique of Pagan Mimesis. In *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hester, Marcus B. 1967. *The Meaning of Poetic Metaphor*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Hoberman, John M. 1984. *Sport and Political Ideology*, 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Hoven, Matt. 2016. 'Sport as a Celebrative and Worshipful Act': Taking Back Sport through Theological Reflection. *Practical Theology* 9: 213–25. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Huizinga, Johan. 1949. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Kretchmar, R. Scott. 2000. Moving and Being Moved: Implications for Practice. *Quest* 52: 260–72.
- Kretchmar, R. Scott. 2017a. Sport, Fiction, and the Stories They Tell. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 44: 55–71. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kretchmar, Scott. 2017b. Games and Fiction: Partners in the Evolution of Culture. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 11: 12–25. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kretchmar, Scott. 2018. Gateways to Culture: Play, Games, Metaphors, and Institutions. *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 18: 47–65. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Markus, Robert Austin. 1957. St. Augustine on Signs. *PHRO* 2: 60–83. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Markus, Robert Austin. 1995. Signs, Communication, and Communities. In *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*. Edited by Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Morissette, Jean-François. 2014. The Theatricality of Sport and the Issue of Ideology. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 41: 381–97. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Nielsen, Cynthia R. 2021. Gadamer on Play and the Play of Art. In *The Gadamerian Mind*. Edited by Theodore D. George and Gert-Jan van der Heiden. London: Routledge.
- Novak, Michael. 1976. *The Joy of Sports*. New York: Basic Books.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. 1982. "Usus" and "Fruitio" in Augustine, "De Doctrina Christiana" I. *Journal of Theological Studies* 33: 361–97. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Pecknold, Chad. C. 2005. *Transforming Postliberal Theology: George Lindbeck, Pragmatism and Scripture*. London: T & T Clark International.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. 2000. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

- Ricoeur, Paul. 1973. Metaphor and the Central Problem of Hermeneutics. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 3: 42–58. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1976. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1978. Imagination in Discourse and in Action. In *The Human Being in Action: The Irreducible Element in Man Part II*. Edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 3–22.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1980. Ways of Worldmaking (Review). *Philosophy and Literature* 4: 107–20. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1981. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*. Translated by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1984. *Time and Narrative*. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin, and David Pellauer. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, vol. 1.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1989. *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*. London: Athlone Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 2003. *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*. Translated by Robert Czerny. London: Routledge.
- Smith, James K. A. 2009. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Smith, James K. A. 2014. *Who's Afraid of Relativism? Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Smith, Jason M. 2020. Foucault for Heisman: College Football and the Liturgies of Power. *Religions* 11: 122. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Smith, Zachary. 2019. Can Sport Be Regarded as 'Cultural Liturgy'? Recognizing the Significance of the Liturgical Frame for the Social Scientific Study of Sport. *Sport in Society* 22: 224–38. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Stock, Brian. 1996. *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1982. *Theories of the Symbol*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Wagg, Stephen, Carlton Brick, Belinda Wheaton, and Jayne Caudwell. 2009. Semiotics. In *Key Concepts in Sports Studies*. London: Sage, pp. 198–204.
- Ward, Graham. 2005. *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, Paul. 2014. *Animation, Sport and Culture*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- White, John Bentley. 2018. Sacramentally Imagining Sports as a Form of Worship: Reappraising Sport as a Gesture of God. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 12: 94–114. (In English). [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Williams, Rowan. 1989. Language, Reality and Desire in Augustine's "De Doctrina". *Literature and Theology* 3: 138–50. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by Gertrude E. M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.